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# NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION REPORT

## RECREATION

ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CONSERVATION BRANCH

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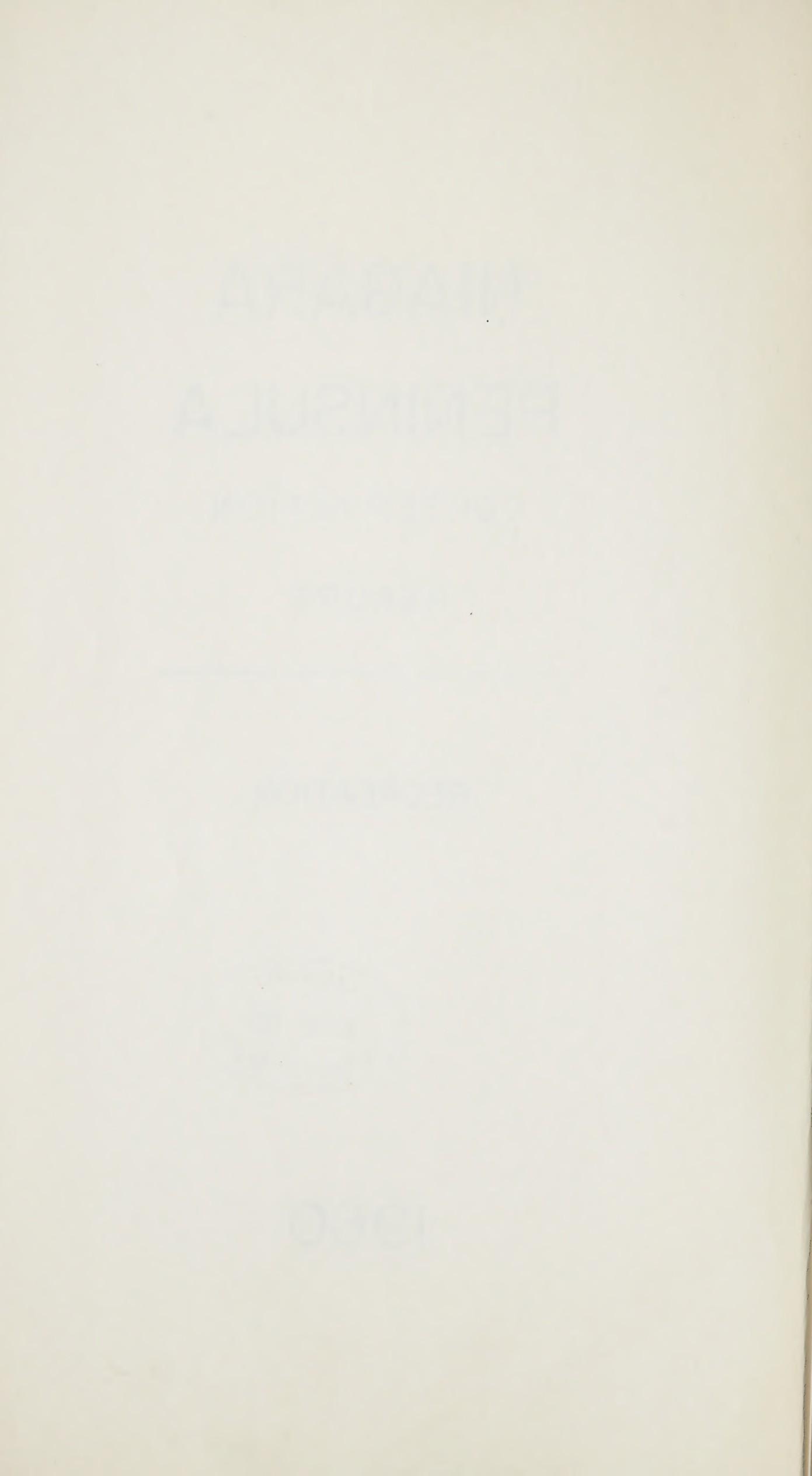
NIAGARA  
PENINSULA  
CONSERVATION  
REPORT

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RECREATION



1960



#### AUTHORSHIP

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The field work for this report was done and  
the report written by Ali Tayyeb.

Editing and format were under the personal  
supervision of A. H. Richardson, R.P.F., P.Eng.,  
assisted by A.S.L. Barnes, R.P.F.



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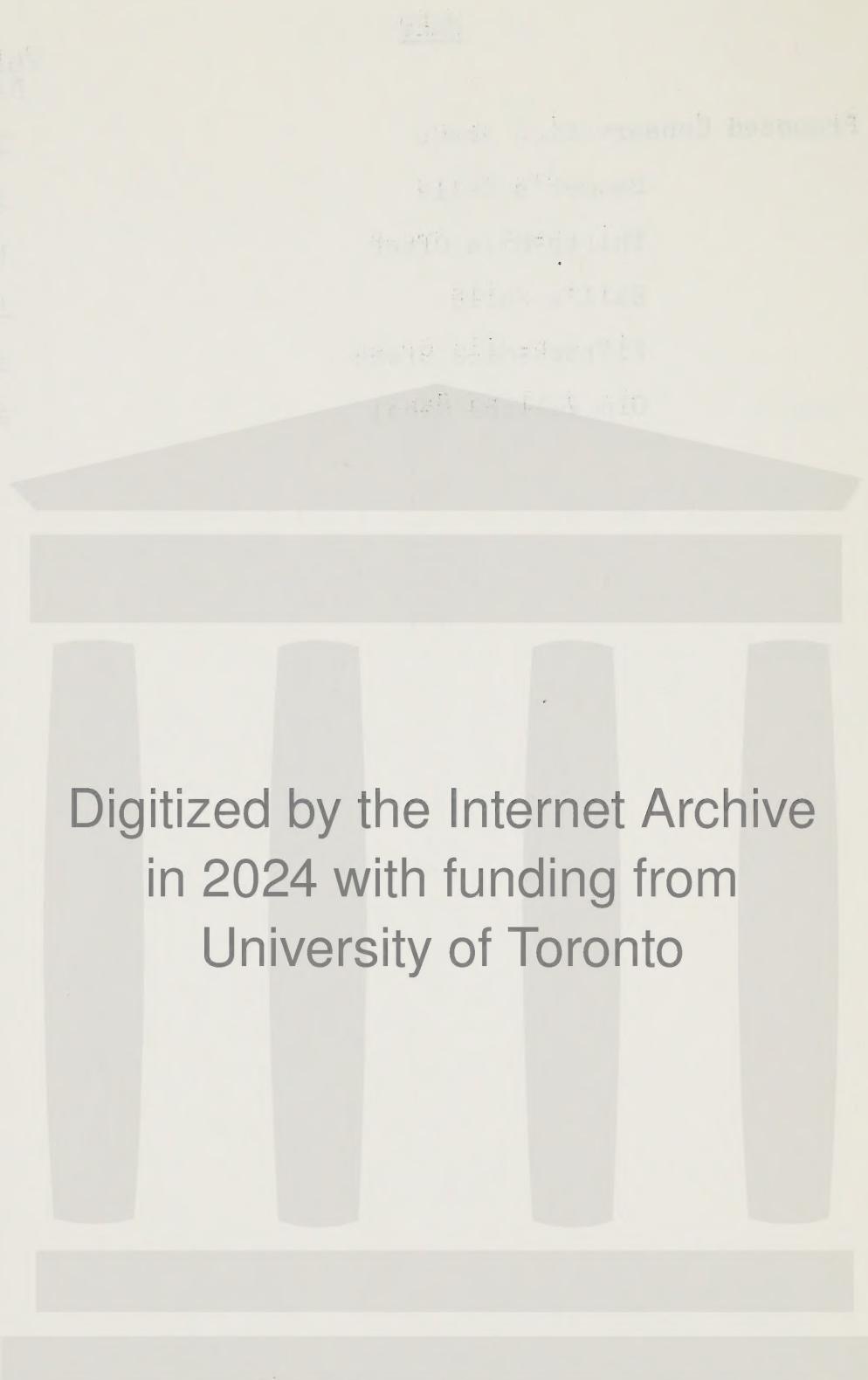
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RECOMMENDATIONS  
STATED OR IMPLIED IN THIS REPORT

That the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority consider the possibilities of developing the following areas for conservation and recreation:-

Beamer's Falls  
Thirty-Mile Creek  
Ball's Falls  
Fifteen-Mile Creek  
Old Welland Canal



## CHAPTER 1

### THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority covers an area of 800 square miles and since it was impossible to make a survey of the whole of this region during the summer of 1959, the decision was made with the concurrence of the Authority, to deal with the Niagara Escarpment only. Therefore, this report covers the area of the Niagara Escarpment as outlined in the Proposed Niagara Escarpment Park prepared by the Tri-County Committee.

However, during the summer the Authority became interested in three proposed Conservation Areas, namely, Long Beach on the shore of Lake Erie, Ball's Falls near Beamsville and Grassy Brook near Chippawa and reports have been prepared on each of these Areas.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

#### 1. Importance of the Escarpment in the Region

The Peninsula as a whole is about 15 miles wide (between Lakes Erie and Ontario) and about 35 miles long from the edge of Stoney Creek to the International border at Niagara Falls and Fort Erie. The western two-thirds is mainly agricultural land, while urban concentrations, namely, St. Catharines, Welland, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, are in the eastern third. A ribbon of rapidly developing urban and industrial growth also extends all along the Queen Elizabeth Highway, which runs slightly inshore from Lake Ontario in the north.

This region contains over 300,000 people, the majority of whom dwell in towns and cities. It is also one of the major industrial regions of the province, containing over 500 factories which employ over 50,000 workers and produce over \$500 million worth of goods. These high industrial and urban values are largely a response to one of the world's busiest commercial arteries, the Welland Canal which joins two busy commercial lakes and cuts across the peninsula in the eastern section.

The Niagara Escarpment which runs from east to west in a more or less continuous band of steep slopes is a landmark which, both physically and economically, is the most prominent geographic break in this part of Ontario. Urban and industrial concentrations for the most part lie either along the lakeshore and the highways at the foot of the escarpment or at strategic points on the brow of the escarpment - the latter particularly where natural or artificial water channels descend the escarpment. These critical points are used to develop waterpower as at De Cew Falls near St. Catharines and at Niagara Falls, as well as to provide organized descent of navigation channels as in the case of the Welland Canal at



Thorold. Basically therefore it is the escarpment which has made this region the producer of one of the largest blocks of hydro-electric power in the country.

Apart from these critical points, however, the escarpment's economic value is a rather negative one, the slopes for the most part being so steep as to prohibit agricultural or any other kind of settlement. Only where the slope becomes shallow and extended does one find the development of fruit orchards, which otherwise cover the bulk of the flat land both below and atop the escarpment. Occasionally the brow of the escarpment is utilized for the extraction of limestone and gravel, especially where the rock exposures are right and lie close to urban centres. The largest such developments occur in or near Grimsby, St. Catharines, Queenston and Niagara Falls. With the growth in urbanism and industry and the depletion of the rock at existing quarries it is evident that the old quarries will expand and new quarries will be opened. Once the valuable materials have been extracted the sites are abandoned leaving ugly scars and useless lands which disfigure the escarpment. Since quarrying is easiest at the sharp exposed edge, the disfiguring scars occur at the critical and aesthetically most valuable sections of the escarpment and can be seen from miles away.

Since the economic growth of the region has led to an increase in the size as well as the economic status of the population, more and more people are both desirous and able to secure more expensive and satisfying homes for themselves. The automobile has also aided the spread of suburban residential areas which offer cleaner, healthier and more private living. As the escarpment lies close to the urban centres, the more opulent find it possible and preferable to establish homes atop the escarpment where there is maximum privacy combined with excellent vistas. This tendency is most pronounced in the western section which lies close to



industrial Hamilton, whose own escarpment section is already saturated with homes. To a much smaller extent the same is happening in the vicinity of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Most such owners try to secure properties that will extend right to the edge of the cliff to provide private and uninterrupted views of the land and the lake below, an advantage which is being rapidly lost to the public. Experience in other aesthetically valuable areas of the province shows that if measures to reserve part of such areas for public use are not taken while those areas are still available, private interests will completely take over.

## 2. The Physical Geography of the Escarpment

From the western edge of the Conservation Authority region, near Fruitland, to Grimsby, the escarpment forms a continuous band of steep slopes with a drop of nearly 300 feet. The gradient is usually of the order of one in three and the three roads that descend this forbidding slope have to make elaborate hairpin bends. For the most part, the slope in this section is too steep to maintain dense vegetation but the altitude and the steepness combine to give even sparsely and precariously growing trees an appearance of continuity and denseness. No streams descend this stretch, the drainage atop the escarpment usually running parallel to the escarpment face. The first break-through occurs just above Grimsby, where the Forty Mile Creek abruptly turns northwards, cutting through a deep notch in the escarpment face and cascading down at Beamer's Falls, which is a site of considerable beauty.

East of Grimsby there is a decline in the relative height and width of the steep slope, and two miles east of Beamer's Falls the escarpment broadens out presenting two steep slopes; a narrow band with less than 100 feet drop lying at the lower or northern end and a wider band with a



drop of nearly 200 feet lying at the upper or southern edge of the escarpment. The area, with a considerable variety of topography, where the two bands separate, has been developed as a privately owned golf course. Eastwards, the land between the two bands has a cover of fertile lime-rich soil, which has permitted the development of fruit orchards. The eastern edge of this short stretch of broad slope is marked by a deep structural notch occupied by a small inconsequential-looking stream called Thirty-Mile Creek, whose intermittent ten-mile-long channel contains little water except during the spring thaw.

The notch in the escarpment face itself is quite striking. At the top of the notch stands a beautiful church known as Thirty Mountain Church which by its prominence can be seen for miles. The little gorge below the church contains a rocky, staircase and fairly steep slopes covered by mixed woods. East of this notch the steep escarpment face all but disappears.

A narrow band of the characteristic steep face reappears three miles to the east. Its western edge is marked by disused as well as active quarries, but the better part of the slope and the brow of this stretch of the escarpment contains fairly dense coniferous and deciduous woods. Difficult of access and lacking streams, this stretch is of no special recreational value.

The escarpment again becomes prominent three miles to the east in the vicinity of Ball's Falls, where Twenty-Mile Creek has exposed the bedrock at the escarpment edge which it negotiates in two small drops - the Upper and Lower Ball's Falls. The latter occurs at a rocky horseshoe face which is a most beautiful and awe-inspiring sight. The stream makes a bend at the bottom of the falls but resumes the northerly course, flowing through a magnificent gorge with



steep and densely wooded slopes until it reaches No. 8 Highway at Jordan. From the point of view of recreation, this is the most striking site on the escarpment.

For the next ten miles or so the escarpment loses altitude and prominence and is covered extensively by glacial over-burden, yet continues to assert itself intermittently, especially where sizeable streams cut through the glacial cover to expose the rocky face. This occurs in the characteristic manner, first, near Rockway where Fifteen-Mile Creek cuts through, and again above St. Catharines where Twelve-Mile Creek negotiates its way down the broad slopes. The escarpment shows more prominently, however, at De Cew Falls, where the water diverted from the Welland Canal is made to drop down the steep face to provide a head for hydro-electric power.

At, and east of, Thorold the escarpment again gains prominence. At the edge of this town the escarpment contains the staircase of the Welland Canal Locks, and one of its prominent outliers just east of the canal has become the chief supplier of gravel and stone for the industries of the adjacent urban area. The main line of the Canadian National Railway cuts the north-eastern edge of this outlier.

Across the railway line to the north at the tri-junction of Grantham, Niagara and Stamford Townships lies another prominent lozenge-shaped mesa of the escarpment, a striking view of which is had from the Queen Elizabeth Way which skirts its north-eastern tip. Eastward, the escarpment broadens out into a dissected pocket just south of St. Davids to appear finally west of and along the Niagara River. The river here flows through a 200-foot-deep canyon which increases in depth upstream until the climax is reached at the world-famous Canadian Horse Shoe Falls. A magnificent amphitheatre of sheer rock, a jagged and curving edge, a turbulent and voluminous stream, roaring falls and extensive



whirlpools at the bottom of the canyon, climax the Niagara Escarpment at this eastern most limit of the region.

In summary, then, the escarpment, which is essentially a geographic break, at the same time contains a highly varied, even if limited economic potential. Orchards, quarrying, water-power, navigational developments and industry, generally occur separately along the escarpment, but sometimes even simultaneously. The bulk of the escarpment nevertheless remains undeveloped so far. Of late the economic and population pressure in this part of Southern Ontario has tended to bring settlement and development rapidly to the escarpment. This tendency, if unchecked, is bound to result in an arbitrary encroachment and spoil any prospects of its utilization for recreational purposes. This report is designed to suggest urgent measures to forestall the harmful tendencies and assist recreational development.



## CHAPTER 3

### PLANNING OF THE ESCARPMENT FOR RECREATION

There were a few who foresaw the danger even prior to the recent rapid encroachments on the escarpment. For example, Dr. D.F. Putnam of the Department of Geography of the University of Toronto made a concrete proposal for the conservation of the entire escarpment in the vicinity of the lakeshore urban belt for recreation purposes before the mushrooming of the post-war urban and industrial development. At that time the very size of the area in his proposal appeared much too large for it to be excluded from development as valuable real estate land. Within two decades of his proposal building on the escarpment has taken place so rapidly and in such an arbitrary and unorganized fashion as to inhibit the formulation of any kind of organized development. This is best illustrated by examining a semi-official resurrection of the original proposal by the counties of the Niagara region for the establishment of an Escarpment Park and Park Drive.

#### 1. The Proposed Niagara Escarpment Park and Park Drive.

The proposal for the conservation of the escarpment for recreation purposes was made by a group of municipal officials from the three counties of the region, called the Tri-County Committee and drafted and edited by the treasurer of the Wentworth County. The group prepared a most impressive brochure depicting the natural beauty of the escarpment through magnificent full colour photographs accompanied by pictorial pencil sketches and pithy poetic comments. The total effect was considered so eloquent and convincing as to obviate the necessity of any descriptive or written explanation of the proposal except through a very general sketch of the main roads, streams and towns. The escarpment slope itself is not shown but it is easy to infer that all its prominent sections are included within the proposed park, which is shown by a solid green wash.



The proposed park begins at Felkers Falls, four miles south-west of Stoney Creek and follows the escarpment edge east to the Devils Punch Bowl which is an awesome recess in the escarpment brow just south of Stoney Creek. This section is still outside the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority region which begins a mile further east. The park which covers the entire slope extends in a continuous band eastwards to Thorold, a distance of over 25 miles.' At two places it projects southwards - first to include Ball's Falls where Twenty-Mile Creek cascades down the escarpment face, and then to incorporate the broad catchment area of Twelve-Mile Creek south of St. Catharines. In this latter part the park does not incorporate the steep face of the escarpment which is occupied by the hydro-electric generating system at De Cew Falls. East of De Cew Falls, in the Twelve-Mile Creek area, the escarpment broadens out and loses the characteristic steep face only to resume it eastwards between St. Catharines and Thorold. The park continues east of Thorold into Queenston where it incorporates two exposed outliers of the escarpment. Throughout, the park is traversed by a proposed driveway, which is supposed to provide the best view of the adjacent and low-lying areas.

On the whole the proposal is very noble and salutary in concept, yet also very unrealistic in fact. This is borne out by the realization that while the proposed park will put the escarpment face into ideal use, it will do so only by monopolizing it for public use as strictly as other areas have been monopolized by private interests. Even so, the proposed park is not possible of accomplishment without prohibitively large expense, for many sections of the escarpment within the proposed park are already under private ownership and contain very expensive homes, a matter which is either not known to the proposing group or has been ignored by it.





View from the Niagara escarpment across orchards of the shoreland. The narrow wooded strip of the escarpment is in the foreground.



The brow of the escarpment in many places is occupied by expensive homes because of the magnificent view it provides.



Investigation revealed that the brochure and the map in question are essentially the result of an office study not preceded by any field work or examination of the existing situation. The value of the proposal, therefore, lies basically in the fact that it shows a growing awareness and enthusiasm on the part of public organizations for the provision of much needed recreation areas.

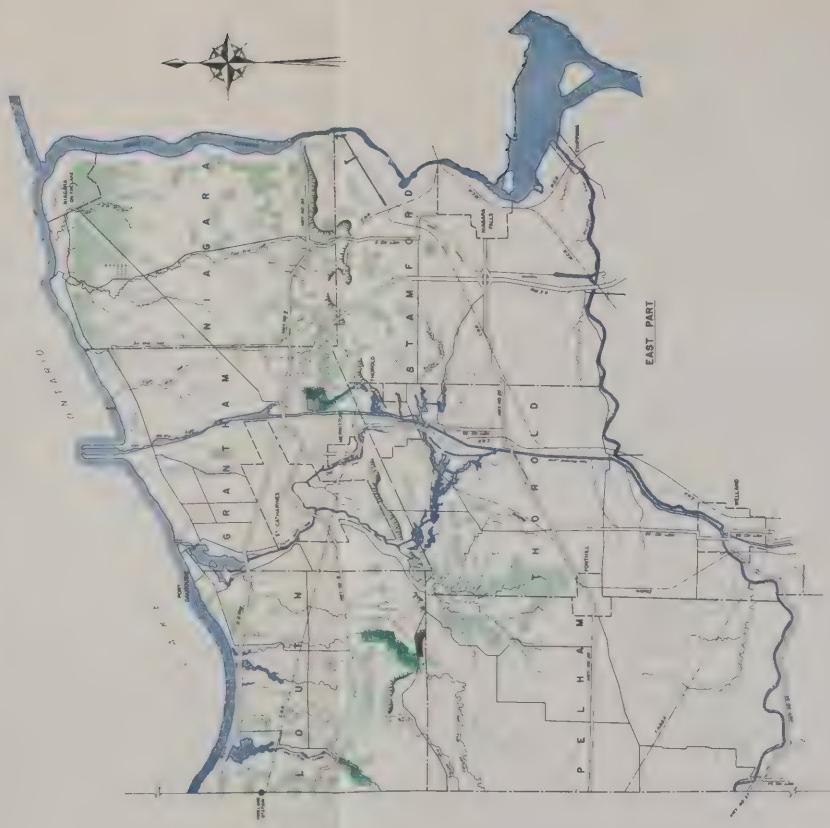
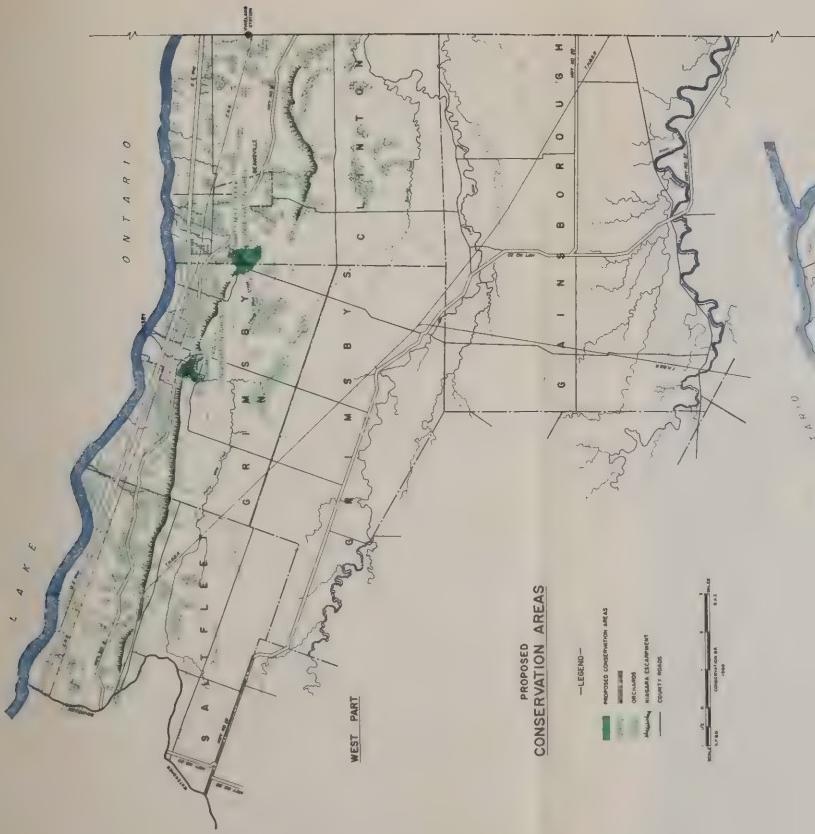
## 2. The Escarpment in Relation to Recreational Needs

A realistic assessment of the recreational value of the Niagara Escarpment can be appropriately made, only by first examining the recreational needs and habits of the people involved.

Recreational needs and habits have undergone a profound change during the last few decades. The open countryside and natural areas still hold considerable fascination for many. The number of such areas has declined very rapidly in the face of expanding cities, but, on the other hand, the automobile and better roads have brought the few remaining areas, even if distant, within the range of most people. Most people no longer visit natural areas for hiking, or for walks - they are inclined to do so only if more positive recreational facilities are available. Of these swimming and fishing in summer, and skiing and sledding in winter are by far the most popular. The two former, therefore, depend upon the availability of water, the latter, upon the availability of snow and appropriate slopes.

Shade, especially in summer, is also an important consideration although not a determining factor in summer recreation as can be seen from the size of crowds that inundate the bare sandy beaches of Southern Ontario. Indeed, sun-tanning has become inseparably associated with outdoor swimming. For winter sports trees are a distinct disadvantage, but wooded areas and shade are essential features of areas suitable for hunting and picnicking. Picnicking is still a common form of







recreation, but most people prefer to associate it with other recreational activities, and proportionately few are content with picnicking alone.

At first sight the Niagara escarpment would appear to be ideal for winter sports, many of its sections farther north in the Barrie-Collingwood area, for instance, have become popular for these activities. Within the region under study, however, either its slopes are too steep, or they are too densely wooded, or there is insufficient snow. Consequently most of the escarpment between Stoney Creek and Fort Erie remains unsuitable or undeveloped for winter recreation.

Prospects for large-scale summer recreational facilities on the escarpment are even more limited, largely due to the lack of sizeable streams. Except for the Welland River streams like the Twelve-Mile, the Twenty-Mile and the Forty-Mile Creeks are in spate with abundant water following the thaw in spring, but with the approach of summer they are reduced to mere trickles. Where the streams have more sizeable and reliable water supply, as in the vicinity of St. Catharines, the water is either monopolized for the production of hydro-electric power, or is too polluted to permit swimming and fishing. Contrary to the general impression, the recreational potential of the escarpment is actually quite limited.

The most appropriate and extensively available recreational use is picnicking and the enjoyment of scenic views from the top of the escarpment. It is for this reason that almost all known proposals for the preservation of the escarpment for recreation, stipulate a scenic drive.

There are a number of areas which could be developed into beautiful recreational sites along such a drive and proposals for the escarpment, therefore, emphasize this aspect.



## CHAPTER 4

### PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ESCARPMENT FOR RECREATIONAL NEEDS

Taking into consideration the encroachment on the escarpment which has already taken place and a continuing acquisition by private interests for residential and industrial uses, it is now futile and unrealistic to think in terms of a continuous escarpment park. The most that can be done, but this should be done immediately, is to select those areas which are outstandingly suited for recreational use and freeze them for such use.

The areas that should be acquired by the Authority are as follows:

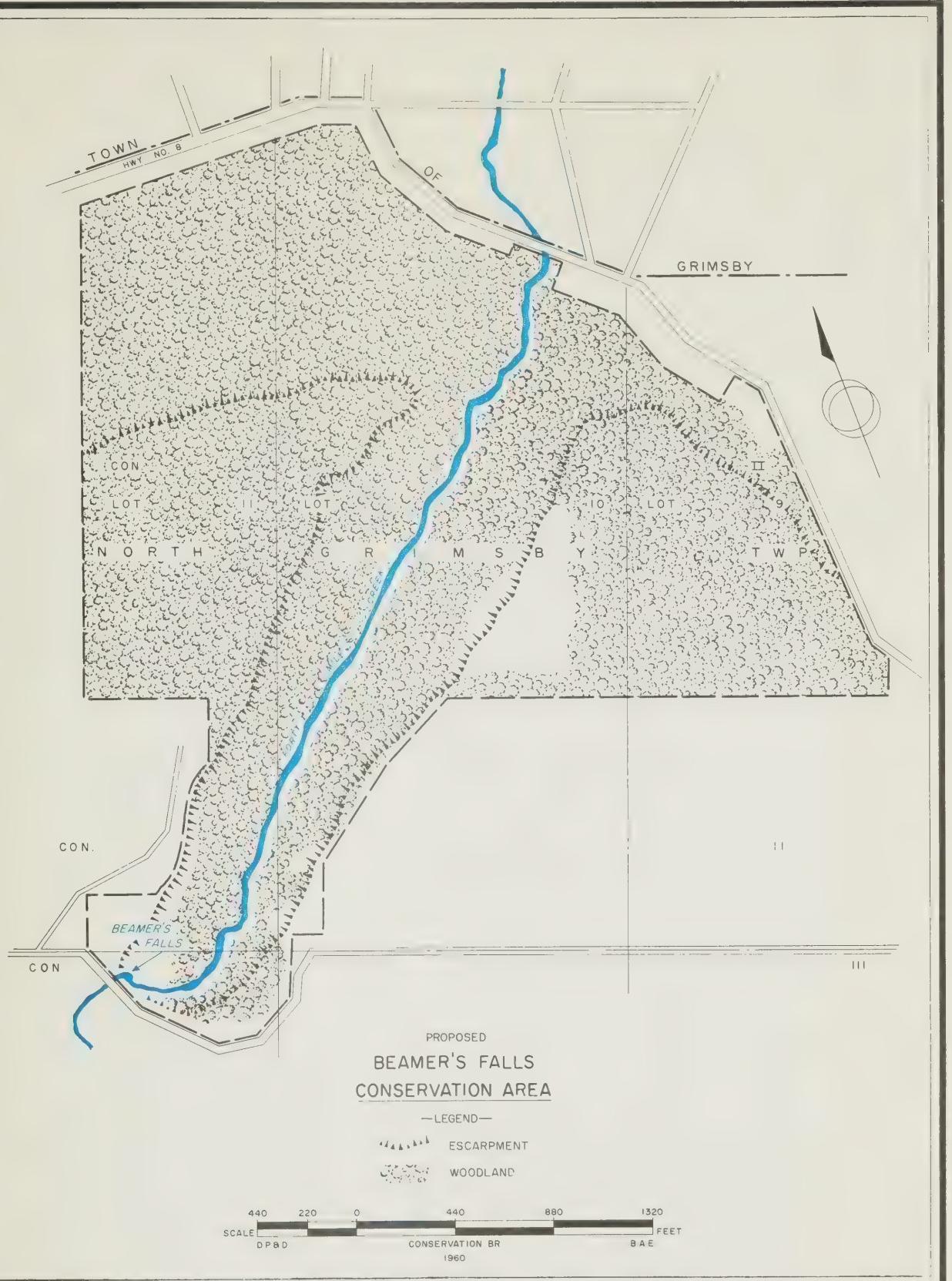
1. Beamers Falls

(a) Location and Size

The proposed Area lies approximately half-way between Hamilton and Niagara Falls and a mile south of Grimsby where Forty-Mile Creek cuts a deep notch in the face of the escarpment. It lies in Concession II, Lots 9 to 11 of Grimsby Township and is easily accessible from No. 8 Highway as well as from the Queen Elizabeth Highway. From Grimsby a paved, all-weather road obliquely ascends the escarpment to join No. 20 Highway 6 miles farther south. Within half a mile of Grimsby, i.e., on just reaching the top of the escarpment, this road is met from the west by a paved county road which runs all the way east from the village of Stoney Creek paralleling the high edge of the escarpment. This latter road passes through the head of the valley in the proposed Area, which lies only half a mile west of its junction with the road to Grimsby Centre and No. 20 Highway.

The proposed Area occupies approximately 130 acres of rough valley land consisting mainly of a rocky stone-strewn bottom and steep slopes. It also includes broad flanks of the main escarpment, stretching east and west of the valley along No. 8 Highway.







(b) Physical Features

The proposed Area occupies the most spectacular section of Forty-Mile Creek where the stream which hitherto flows in an easterly direction on the relatively flat top of the escarpment makes an abrupt northerly turn to flow down the rugged escarpment face through Grimsby and finally into Lake Ontario.

The stream begins to cut through the rock nearly a mile before it approaches the main face of the escarpment. The cut is deeply incised and originates with a 60-foot fall locally called Beamer's Falls. The balance of the drop of nearly 240 feet down to Grimsby is contained by a narrow rocky valley with a gradient of approximately one in ten. The banks on either side are very jagged and nearly precipitous, their full beauty being most clearly appreciated either from the head of the valley looking downstream or from just above the bridge at No. 8 Highway looking upstream.

For the better part of the year the stream contains very little water. The maximum volume is attained during the spring thaw, but all of the water is rapidly carried down the steep gradient. Provision can be made to hold some water in the stream for swimming in summer by the construction of a small dam. This should be considered essential to the recreational development of the Area.

At the present the most rewarding and easiest access to the valley is from the vicinity of Beamer's Falls, particularly from the eastern bank which descends to the valley in two separate platforms. The strata on these platforms are often horizontal and the rock surfaces abound in imbedded fossils of pre-glacial plants and water animals. These should be of considerable recreational and educational value to the young folk as well as to more mature professional people interested in different branches of science.



Flanking the valley are two stretches of land at the top of the main escarpment. The slopes are characterized by jagged rock protrusions formed by massive blocky limestone. The land at the top is relatively flat and covered with reasonably thick glacial soils. These flat areas have been included to provide adequate parking, playing and picnic areas.

(c) Vegetation and Wildlife

All but a fraction of the area is wooded, with deciduous trees predominating. The cover is densest in the valley and on the escarpment slopes, but thins out considerably atop the edge on flat land, only a small portion of which is sparsely treed. Some of the flat wooded land will probably have to be cleared to provide grassy stretches, parking space and playing fields.

The valley, particularly, is most colourful during the autumn, but appears restful with its dense greenery also during most of summer, a haven for the artist, the photographer, and the hiker alike.

Wildlife, except for the squirrel and the rabbit, is rather scarce. Some fishing is done but the supply is limited. Occasionally, deer are known to visit the area, but they are in transit and do not make their home here.

(d) Property Acquisition

All the land is privately owned. Proximity to Grimsby and the preference for suburban homes is tending to stretch residential development along the roads on the south-eastern margin of the area which will be rather expensive to acquire.

The proposed plan includes built-up land as well as that which is likely to be built upon in the near future. The rest of the land is far more suited to recreational use than to other uses. Since the bulk of the land is either rough or very poor agriculturally its appropriation for



recreation does not conflict to any appreciable degree with other possible future uses.

(e) Possible Uses

The Area could be most easily and appropriately developed for family picnics. Trails through the woods should be particularly enjoyable, and swimming areas can be developed as and when the necessity arises.

2. The Thirty-Mile Creek Conservation Area

(a) Location and Size

The proposed Area lies about 4 miles east of Grimsby, nearly half-way between Hamilton and Niagara Falls. It is easily accessible from No. 8 Highway, which passes a mile to the north and to which the area is directly connected by a township road. The county road along the escarpment turning northward into Grimsby Beach also connects the area, first to No. 8, and then to the Queen Elizabeth Highway. Southwards, the same county road runs to Smithville which lies on No. 20 Highway.

The property occupies about 320 acres of valley land produced by the passage of the Thirty-Mile Creek down the escarpment, and stretches from the top of the escarpment almost to the edge of the slope near No. 8 Highway. It lies on Concessions II and III of Clinton, Lots 22 and 23, and Concession III, Lot N of Grimsby Township.

(b) Physical Features

As mentioned earlier, all the way from Hamilton to Grimsby, the Niagara escarpment stretches in a continuous band with a very steep slope. Only just west of Thirty-Mile Creek does the escarpment fork out into two prongs, the steeper one with a 150-foot drop lying near the top and the narrower one with only a 75-foot drop, situated closer to the foot, i.e., near the edge of the lowland. The land between these two prongs has a shallower slope, a drop of 100 feet extending over almost a mile.





PROPOSED  
THIRTY MILE CREEK  
CONSERVATION AREA

**—LEGEND—**

- ▲▲▲▲▲ STEEP SLOPES  
▲▲▲ WOODLAND  
○○○ ORCHARDS

A horizontal scale bar diagram. It features a thick black line with numerical markings at 660, 330, 0, 660, 1320, and 1980. Above the line, the word "SCALE" is written vertically on the left, and "FEET" is written vertically on the right. Below the line, the text "DPBD" is on the far left, "CONSERVATION BR" is in the center, and "8.A.E" is on the far right. The number 1960 is centered below the "CONSERVATION BR" label.



In traversing the slope the creek has incised itself through steep, as well as shallow, slopes in a rather unusual manner - the valley being wider near the top and progressively narrowing down the slope into what is almost a gorge at the lower end. Here the steep slopes produced by the stream are prominent enough to eclipse the slopes of the escarpment, the innocuous little valley producing a terrain which is physically more attractive than the escarpment which hitherto was the dominant physical feature.

The stream has a rather intermittent water supply. In the spring it is quite a forceful torrent, but later in the summer it is reduced to a mere trickle. Even so, it has considerable erosive power as is indicated by the depth of the gorge and the steep jagged banks. Beyond the east bank, lies a stretch of undulating land where the escarpment slope becomes shallower, the land dropping 200 feet over a distance of nearly a mile. Although no skiing is possible at present, the slopes can be developed for this sport. The steep fifty-foot drop near the top of the escarpment would provide sufficient momentum to carry the skier across the relatively flat stretch of 300 yards before he approaches another steep and undulating slope extending almost to the bottom.

Primarily, therefore, the area is suited for winter, rather than summer recreation. However, the construction of a dam across the stream could easily produce a swimming area for use in summer as well.

#### (c) Vegetation and Wildlife

Nearly 50 per cent of the area is in trees which occur in two main concentrations. The smaller, relatively sparsely wooded block occupies the top, the wider section of the valley, and contains a mixture of broad-leaved trees and pines of varying age and size. The larger block lies atop the eastern bank and has a more homogeneous and denser concentration of broad-leaved trees mainly poplar and maple. This is





This view shows the beautiful valley of Jordan Creek below Ball's Falls.



The stream bed of Jordan Creek is almost dry in summer.



Beamer's Falls near Grimsby carry little water in July and August.



actually a well-preserved woodlot of the farm property which occupies the entire land atop the eastern bank. The farmer's home lies south of the woodlot on the road, and beyond or farther south on the shallower slope, land has been cleared for pasture. Here, the soil is deep and drainage considerably better. Agriculturally the land is under-developed, for it could easily support orchards which are the chief crop of the region.

From the recreational point of view, the trees in the valley are more impressive, not only by their variety of type, size and colour, but also because they occupy a more interesting terrain. The woods are especially suited for hiking trails. The denser woodlot on the top could become the main picnic area and is the one which can be most appropriately developed.

(d) Property Acquisition

All the land is privately owned. Large sections of it are suitable for pastures as well as cultivation of orchards and its value would be considerably enhanced if the land were developed for fruit farming. The rougher land closer to the gorge would also be attractive for residential developments if it were closer to urban areas. Similar lands in the neighbourhood are in fact being acquired for expensive homes, the owners working often in Hamilton, St. Catharines or Niagara Falls. At the present time there is no indication of this property being either put to a better agricultural use or being sought for residential developments, both of which are bound to increase the price. The Authority would do well to investigate the acquisition of this property for recreation purposes.

(e) Possible Uses

In its present state the property has very limited recreational value. On the other hand its recreational



**BALL'S FALLS CONSERVATION AREA**

PROPOSED

L O U T H      T W P.

JORDAN

H.W.Y.  
NO. 8

CREEK  
MILL  
TWENTY

CONCESSION

PAILS

F.D.

CONCESSION

LOT

FALLS

LOT

LOT

LOT

LOT

LOT

LOT

22

20

21

23

—LEGEND—

WOODLAND

ESCARPMENT

BUILDINGS

CONSERVATION BR.

2000  
FEET

B.A.E.

1960

SCALE  
D.P.S.D.



until it reaches No. 8 Highway. The bed is very stony and gravelly and for the most part the water is cool and clean. The stream tends to be slightly polluted in the vicinity of the highway, mainly because of the sewage and garbage from the dwellings and commercial establishments around the highway bridge.

The banks of the valley are quite steep near the upper reaches, in the vicinity of the falls, dropping sharply 80 to 90 feet on either side, but their height gets lower and the slope shallower as the creek approaches the bridge. For the most part the banks below Ball's Falls are about 450 feet away from the stream.

(c) Vegetation and Wildlife

The floor, and even more so the valley walls are densely wooded. Broad-leaved trees, mainly maple, elm, birch, beech and poplar predominate. Ash and pine trees occur intermittently mostly on the valley floor. Erosion hazard is relatively minor and is likely to remain so as long as the vegetation cover is not removed. The vegetation tends to be rather thin in the immediate vicinity of the main falls, and is even scantier farther upstream, largely because the land is flat. It is deep sandy soil and has been used as pasture and even orchards.

(d) Historical Value

The property is also of some historical value. A large part of it has been in the Ball family for over 150 years. In the past it was a small but thriving commercial community, its grist and flour mill catering to the surrounding area. It is reported that during the war of 1812, a battalion of British soldiers was stationed here for a short time and provisions and food were supplied by Mr. Ball to General Brock's forces stationed as far away as Niagara Falls. General Brock himself visited the Ball family and left gifts and testimonials in appreciation of the hospitality shown to him



and his soldiers. The Ball family is very proud of these valuable mementos.

After the successful conclusion of the war the business prospects of the woollen, flour and grist mills widened so rapidly that a plan was completed to establish a small town in the vicinity of the falls. The property above the falls was accordingly subdivided and laid out in residential and commercial lots, the plan of which has been preserved by the Ball family. With the establishment of the main transport route, No. 8 Highway, below the escarpment, people were suddenly attracted there and the project of the town near Ball's Falls was abandoned. Business also sharply declined and one by one the mills closed down. Only the grist mill continued to operate, until 1910 when that too had to cease operation. Fortunately, the plant is still in good condition and could be easily restored to operative condition as an example of a pioneer industry, for the benefit of tourists and visitors.

(e) Property Acquisition

All but 60 acres on the west bank of the stream below Ball's Falls is owned by the Ball Family. This property contains two orchards, about 15 acres of open pasture land and nearly 60 acres of rough wooded land. There are six buildings consisting of a nine-room brick house, a five-room frame house, two garages, a chicken house, a storage shed and a fully equipped old grist mill.

Because expensive homes are appearing rapidly in those parts of the escarpment which offer scenic advantages, and many well-to-do people are anxious to acquire old properties in scenic locations for use as summer residences, land values are rising in the area. Three expensive new bungalows are already within a mile of this property and owners and sub-dividers are anxious to secure more land in the vicinity of the falls. It is reported that the property on the west bank of



the stream has been acquired with a view to future subdivision. For all these reasons it is important that the Authority take immediate steps to acquire the proposed Area before the prices become too high.

Even before this report was written, the Authority was apprised of the urgency of the situation and it is most gratifying to know that it took prompt steps to secure an option on the 100 acres of land belonging to the Ball family. It is recommended that similar steps be taken to acquire the 60 acres on the west bank as soon as possible. The Authority may have to pay a slightly higher price for this section, but it will be worth doing, for the acquisition of both the banks will naturally make a better unit for the proposed Ball's Falls Conservation Area.

(f) Possible Uses

Even without any improvements the Ball's Falls property contains the most picturesque part of the Niagara escarpment in the peninsula with the obvious exception of Niagara Falls. The falls are most spectacular during the thaw when the Twenty-Mile Creek is a veritable torrent falling down the escarpment with great impact and fury, and producing on a smaller scale a horse-shoe falls of its own. Unfortunately the creek spends its fury in a few weeks, and contains little water below the falls in the succeeding dry period.

It would be easy, however, to conserve considerable water either above or below the falls by means of appropriate small dams which would provide swimming and greatly enhance the recreational value of the property.

There is no dearth of picnic areas, and the property is excellently suited for hikes and trails. The two residences near the larger falls could be used for providing either overnight accommodation or as recreation buildings. Provision should also be made for a small museum of items of



historical interest. The restoration of the grist mill will similarly enhance the attractive value and popularity of the property.

4. Fifteen-Mile Creek Conservation Area

(a) Location and Size

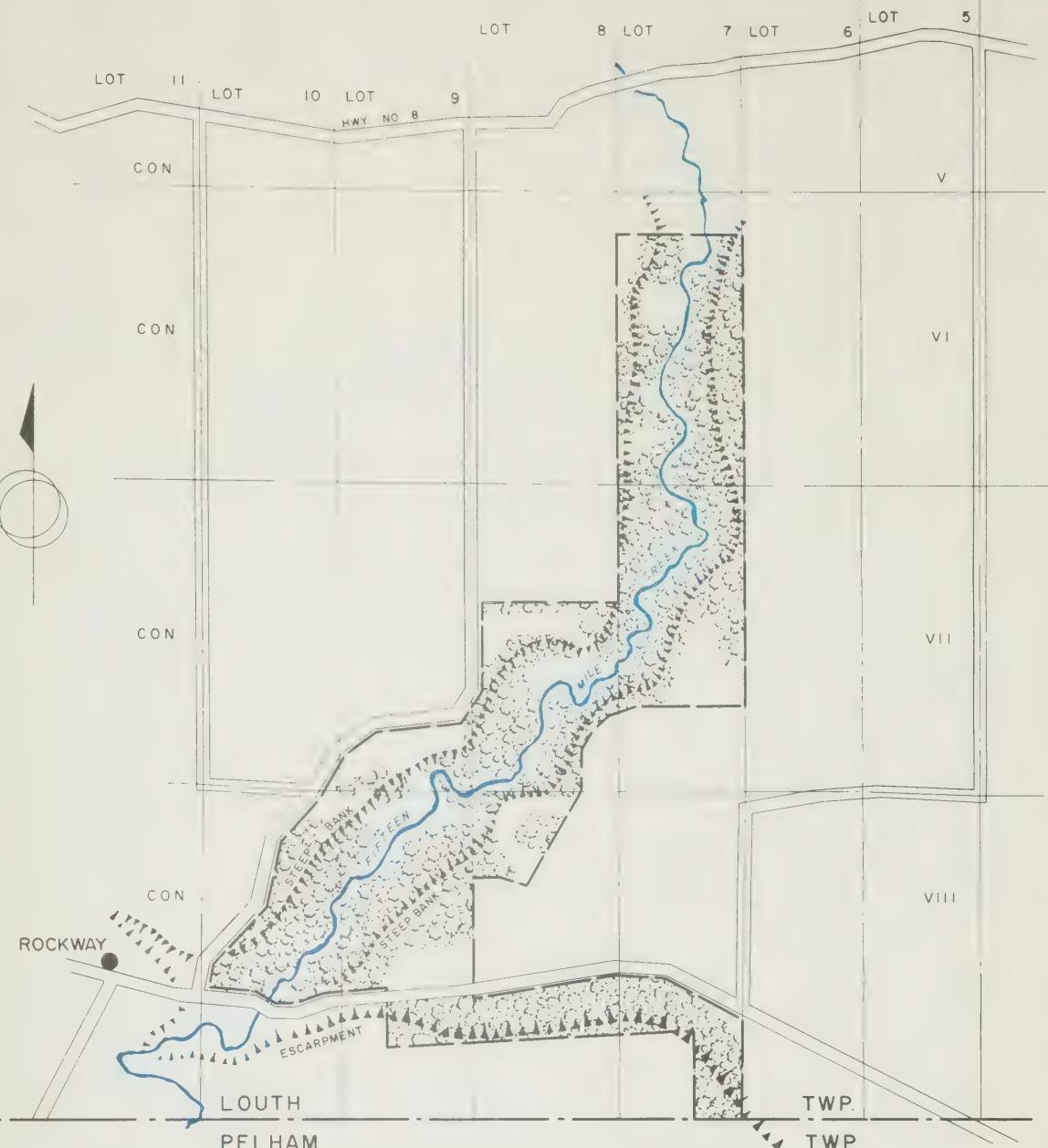
The proposed Area lies just off the hamlet of Rockway, about five miles south-west of St. Catharines, where Fifteen-Mile Creek flows down a small rocky outlier of the Niagara escarpment. Rockway is easily accessible from St. Catharines, by a paved all-weather county road and also from No. 8 Highway which lies 2.5 miles farther north. Indirectly, therefore, it is connected to all the urban centres below the escarpment between Hamilton and Niagara Falls.

The property in question occupies 428 acres in Lots 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Concessions I, II, III, IV and V of Louth Township. It comprises two strips of land, a north-south strip curving along and encompassing the valley land and a small narrow escarpment outlier running eastwards from the upper part of the valley across the road in the south.

(b) Physical Features

The passage of the valley across or down the escarpment rock is in no way spectacular as was the case at Beamer's Falls or Ball's Falls, yet the creek has carved a picturesque little gorge and flows the rest of the way within well-defined banks. The creek is smaller but the ribbons of flat land on either side of the stream in the bottom of the valley are wider than in the larger creeks described earlier. The banks are also not as steep so that access to the stream from all sides is fairly easy. The stream bed is less rocky and the water is quite clean. The amount of water in the stream is considerably less, but owing to a shallower gradient the water of the stream is not drained off as quickly after the





PROPOSED  
FIFTEEN MILE CREEK  
CONSERVATION AREA

—LEGEND—

WOODLAND





thaw as is the case of the Twenty, Thirty or Forty-Mile Creeks mentioned earlier.

There are neither falls nor even cataracts and the swiftly flowing stream has more truly the quality of a vivacious little brook which is attractive in quite a different way from the streams tumbling down precipitous cliffs.

For all these reasons Fifteen-Mile Creek is a more manageable stream and can be developed easily to provide small but excellent swimming and picnic areas.

The outlier of the escarpment off the valley has no outstanding recreational quality except that it rises rather abruptly from the road. The rise of about 100 feet produces many vantage points affording vistas of the low land to the north. The top can be reached either by walking directly up the slope or by driving up. A car track could be most easily provided by a road which would diverge from the existing county road at the western end of the property and rejoin it at the eastern end.

(c) Vegetation and Wildlife

Ninety per cent of the property is wooded, although the cover is not really dense anywhere, which means that the shade provided by the trees can be used more easily and more extensively for recreation. Poplars and maples are the common trees, with occasionally ash and elm trees, but there are few pines. There is no significant wildlife apart from the ubiquitous squirrel and hare, and the few fish which frequent the stream for a brief period each year.

(d) Property Acquisition

The land is privately owned and is far from the urban centres and sufficiently isolated from the main highways to have registered no sudden or significant rise in value. The surrounding land is agriculturally satisfactory, but the area proposed for acquisition is intentionally designated to occupy only that land which is of no special value for agriculture or industry.



(e) Possible Uses

The area can be easily and most appropriately developed into picnic grounds providing facilities for swimming and hiking.

5. The Old Welland Canal Conservation Area

(a) Location and Size

The proposed Area of about 210 acres lies just north-east of the town of Thorold and close to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, only a mile south of the junction of No. 8 and the Queen Elizabeth Highways, from which it is easily accessible by a road paralleling the Welland Canal. Another township road, a mile to the east, also connects No. 8 Highway to the eastern edge of this property, which in the main lies in Lots 5, 6 and 7, Concessions IX and X of Grantham Township.

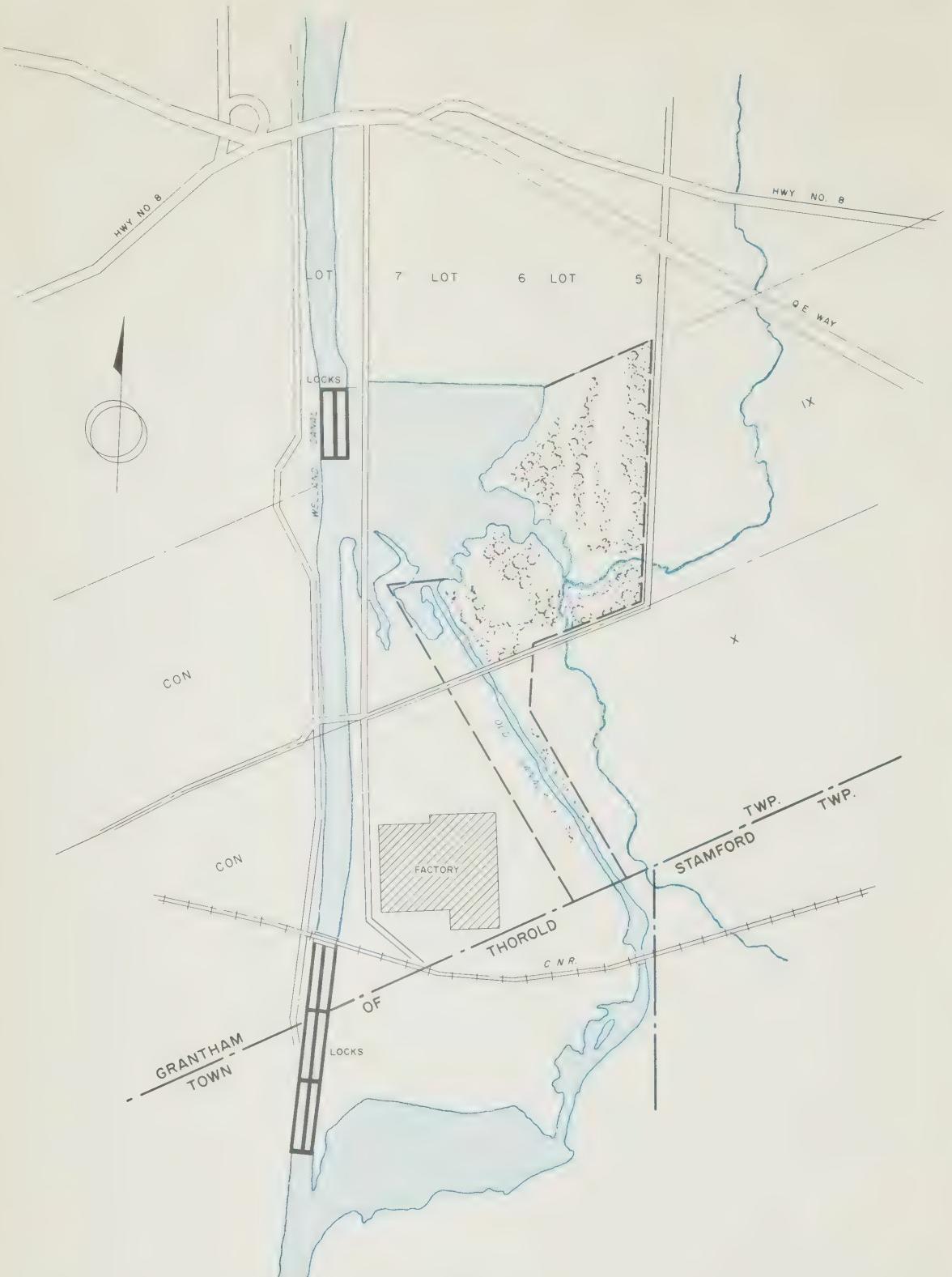
(b) Physical Features

The basic feature here is the old, now disused, Welland Canal which runs for about 2.5 miles before ending in a large water reservoir which is built and maintained for supplying water to the locks of the Welland Canal. The reservoir itself lies outside the limits of the proposed Area although it is presumed that the water at its eastern edge could provide swimming facilities.

The old canal above the reservoir is not only not used, but is also deteriorating for lack of care. Gates from the old locks have either been removed or have fallen down, walls are crumbling in many places, the floor of the canal is crumbling, weeds are growing and the entire area, once a well-kept asset is becoming a scar on the landscape. It is also a possible hazard, for on a number of occasions youngsters were found clambering up the walls or wading and swimming in dangerous places within the canal.

Water within the canal is plentiful throughout the summer, for it is diverted from another reservoir farther





PROPOSED  
OLD WELLAND CANAL  
CONSERVATION AREA

—LEGEND—

WATER ROAD

WOODLAND





up and channelled through the old canal to feed the new reservoir in the vicinity of the lowest locks. The temperature of the water in July and August is usually between 60° and 70° Fahrenheit, comfortable enough for swimming. From the old bridge, which even now carries a motorable road, a view upstream unfolds a series of cascades occurring at the entry and exit points of the old locks, collectively producing a very interesting and pretty picture.

(c) Vegetation and Wildlife

The old canal sides are bordered intermittently and scantily by rows of scrub and deteriorating trees. Vegetation becomes slightly denser in the vicinity of the reservoir in the south and east, but is often patchy even here and is mainly a mixture of miscellaneous shrubs and uncared-for broad-leaved trees of varying age and size. The floor is covered in many places with weeds and is poorly drained in the vicinity of the reservoir. There is no significant wildlife.

(d) Property Acquisition

The Authority will not be able to acquire this property outright since it is owned by the Federal Government and the reservoir is still used to supply water to the Welland Canal. However, it might be possible to secure the use of the land.

The Authority is, therefore, urged to investigate the possibility of making an agreement with the Federal Government which would make it possible for the Authority to develop this as a recreation area.

(e) Possible Uses

On the whole the property is poor in appearance, somewhat run-down and neglected, since it is not fenced off from the public.

It is suggested that, if the Authority assumed responsibility for developing recreational facilities within

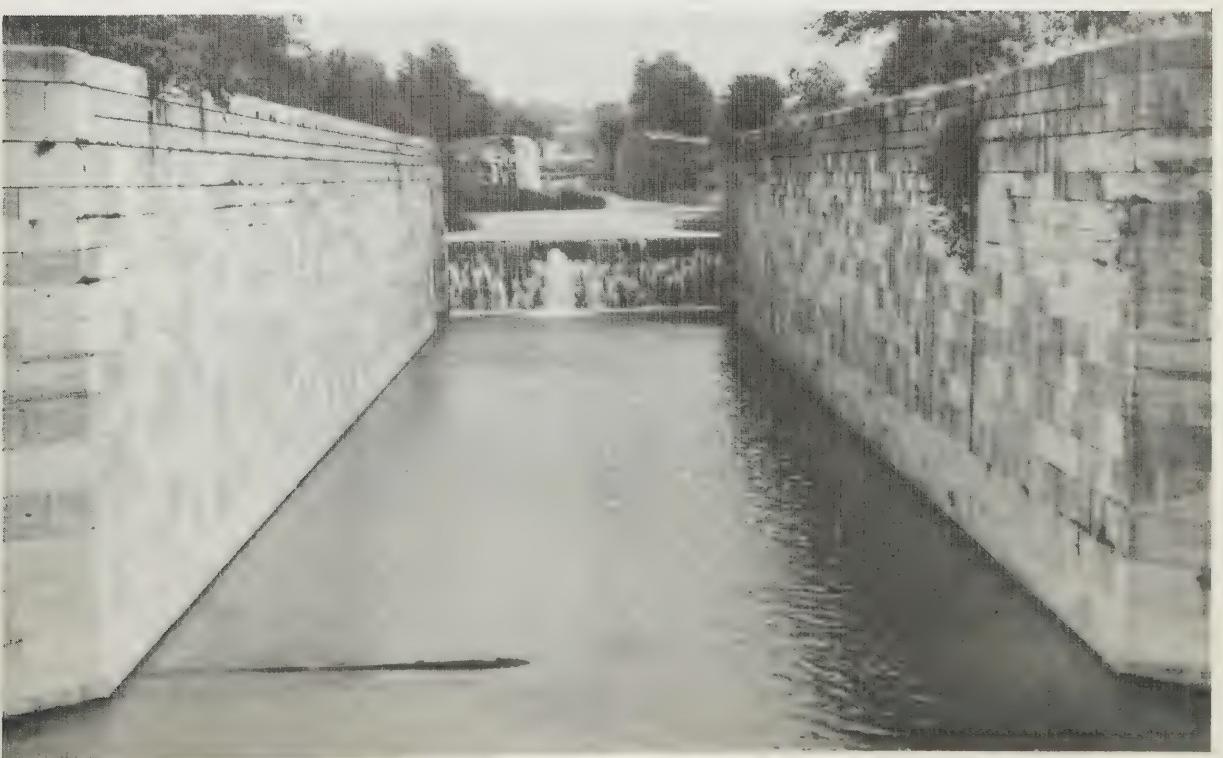




The Old Welland Canal reservoir is used for swimming.



Adjacent lands would make an excellent area for recreation.



The abandoned locks of the old canal add interest to the scene.



the Area, it would not only stop further deterioration by instituting protective and improvement measures, but will also make it safe for those who use it for recreation.

Apart from the swimming facilities which can be made available, trails and picnic areas can also be easily developed. Such facilities would be extremely welcome to the thousands of Canadian and American tourists who visit the locks. Unfortunately the lock area provides neither adequate parking space nor picnic facilities and visitors to the locks experience considerable inconvenience. Provision of adequate rest and recreation space close to these internationally known locks is, therefore, a necessary and well-advised step which will simultaneously enhance the popularity of the locks as well as of the property under review.









